LETTER
TO THE
Free-Thinkers.

By a LAY-MAN.

Professing themselves to be Wise, they became Fools, Rom. I. 22.

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A LETTER to the FREE-THINKERS.

GENTLEMEN,

WHEN Lay-Men ſhall take upon them to introduce new Syſtems of Divinity; when they ſhall not only endeavour to ſhake and undermine Ancient Foundations, but likewiſe poſſeſs the World with belief, that nothing is certain in Religion but Uncertainty: (Tho' the ſeveral Productions of this kind have been fully and ſufficiently anſwer'd by the Clergy, to whoſe Province it peculiarly belongs:) If one under the ſame Denomination as your ſelves ſhould venture to give you his Opinion, it may be preſum'd you will have ſo much Charity to allow, he has no other ſelfiſh Deſign or Int'reſt to purſue, than to find out and defend the Truth.

Among the ſeveral Books you have entertain'd the World with, I ſhall lay my Hand particularly on that late One, entitl'd, *A Diſcourſe on Free-Thinking*: And herein both You and I agree; that to think freely is the Property of a Reaſonable Being: But as this noble Faculty may be employ'd to very good or evil Purpoſes, a *Free-Thinker* may be the beſt, or worſt of Men.

Free-Thinking is ſo far from being a Crime, that 'tis a Duty incumbent on every Man, in proportion to his natural Endowments: 'Tis what diſtinguiſhes him from the brute Beaſt, who has no

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...ege we converſ
, and even with the grea
...hat in a Moment our Thought
...end up to Heaven, and the Heaven of Hea
vens, as quick as a Sun-beam ſhoots down on the Earth: 'Tis by This, that the Priſoner in the Dungeon may keep better Company than the Prince in his Palace: 'Tis by This we diſtinguiſh between Truth and Error; That we receive or reject not by Arbitrary Impoſition, but Freedom of Choice. But as Fire is ſaid to be a good Servant, but a very bad Maſter; ſo 'tis altogether as neceſſary this noble Endowment ſhould be kept within due Bounds and Limitation.

Suppoſe a Ship in the main Ocean, without Pilot, Steerſman or Rudder: She muſt neceſſarily be ſubject to every Wind and Current, and without hope of ever arriving at her deſired Haven. As wild and out of the way muſt all *Free-Thinking* be; And a thouſand Times more fatal, unleſs it has ſome Chart or Compaſs to Steer by.

That God Almighty has not left the World deſtitute of ſuch a Guide, is what I think is agreed on by all who call themſelves by the Name of Chriſtians; that He has given us an infallible Rule to govern our Thoughts as well as Actions: And *yet*, as *Zophar* ſays, *vain man would be wiſe, though Man be born like a wild Aſs's Colt*, Job 11. 12. But let him take heed how he follows his own vain Imaginations.

True *Free-Thinking* conſiſts in a ſincere and impartial Examination of Things; and in receiving and rejecting, purſuant to the cleareſt Evidence, and the beſt Authority.

Let this be taken for granted (and I know no great Reaſon why it ſhould not;) and I dare be bold

bold to affirm [illegible]
Atheist, Deist, or Sceptic.

The Holy Scriptures have [illegible] not o[illegible] the best Authority, but the clearest Evidence, [illegible] is possible any thing of that Nature can have. But this being too large a Field to enter into, I shall refer the Reader to the several Tracts that have been wrote on that Subject, and particularly to those excellent Sermons that have been preach'd at the Honourable Mr. *Boyle*'s Lectures. Nor is it material, what the modern *Free-Thinkers* are so highly delighted with; that is, that there have been several Books received by some as Canonical, and rejected by others; that there have been several ancient Copies, Translations of the Old and New Testament; that these have not entirely agreed one with another, and some other Objections of this Nature. Since 'tis agreed on by all Learned and Wise Men, that there is nothing of Moment relating either to Faith or Practice, but what is to be found in our present Bible.

To be a just *Free-Thinker* 'tis not only requisite a Man should be free from Conceit, Bigotry, Prejudice, and Partiality, *&c.* but likewise from Vice and Immorality: The *Jews* could not believe our Saviour to be the Messias, *because they received Honour one of another.* How shall we then imagine wicked Men can have any true Sentiments of the great Doctrines of the Gospel, (such as a Future Judgment, and eternal Torments) when their last Refuge and Comfort lies in hoping there may be no such Things in Being? Joh. 5. 44.

That Blindness that many hundred Years ago hapned to the *Jews*, *Rom.* 11. 15. has continued upon them down to the present Times: For even

to

heart, 2 Cor. 3.
[illegible] remain as a standing
[illegible] Vengeance against all such
I of [illegible] *Thinkers*; for notwithstanding their Prophets had given them such lively Descriptions of the Messias, that look'd more like a History than a Prophecy; notwithstanding *Isaias* spake of him, as *despised and rejected of Men*; *A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*: That he should be *wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*: That he should be *brought as a Lamb to the slaughter*: and that he should be *cut off out of the land of the living*; all which they saw literally fulfill'd with their own Eyes: Yet notwithstanding all this; Nothing would serve this Proud *Free-Thinking* People, but a Mighty Temporal Monarch; A Mighty Prince was what they would then have had; A Mighty Prince is what they still expect.

Isaiah 53. 3. 5. 7. 8.

To shew then how insufficient Humane Reason of its self is to arrive to the Knowledge of Divine Truths, I shall lay down these Two following Propositions; *viz.*

First, That no Man can think or act as he ought to do in Religious Matters, without the Assistance of Divine Revelation.

In the 2d Place, That wheresoever a Divine Revelation is vouchsaf'd, whosoever shall wilfully act contrary thereto, is not only guilty of the grossest Error, but subjects himself to the utmost Misery.

To make good the First of these, I need only have recourse to the Heathen Way of Worship; into which, whoever will give himself the trouble to

to examine, ma[illegible]
monſtrous Abſurdities, as the utm[illegible]
Divine Being could ever admit of. If any Man denies this, he muſt likewiſe diſown the Holy Scriptures, where their making their Children paſs through the Fire to *Molock*; their Sacrificing their Sons and Daughters to Devils; their paying Divine Worſhip to Stocks and Stones, the Works of Men's Hands; with other their Abominations, are ſufficiently Recorded. The very beſt Sect of the Philoſophers were not free from Errors, and thoſe not of a little Size. The ſo-much-fam'd *Socrates*, who is ſet at the Head of them, and is ſaid to have believed One only God, who made and governed the Univerſe, it ſeems could not hold out to the laſt, ſince it is atteſted of him before he made his *Exit*, he caus'd a Cock to be ſacrific'd to appeaſe *Pluto*, the Infernal Deity. 'Tis true, the World is now grown much older, but very little wiſer; the Hiſtories of *Siam*, *China*, with other Parts of the *Indies*; thoſe likewiſe of *Africa* and *America*, do ſufficiently declare, that worſe than *Egyptian* Darkneſs does ſtill overſpread the Heathen World. I ſhall ſay no more on this Propoſition, which is ſelf-evident, and amounts to no leſs than a Demonſtration, That no Man can think or act as he ought in Religious Matters, without the Aſſiſtance of Divine Revelation.

I come now to the Second, *viz.* That wherefoever a Divine Revelation is vouchſaf'd, whoſoever ſhall wilfully act contrary thereto, is not only guilty of the groſſeſt Error, but likewiſe ſubjects himſelf to the utmoſt Miſery. To make this fully appear, I ſhall go as far back as *Adam*.

There's none that believes the Bible, but muſt likewſe believe *Adam* was the firſt Man that ever liv'd

likewise crea- ... and Likeness of God; a perfect Man, free from that Darkness of Mind, and Depravity of Manners, that has since seiz'd his Posterity: Sure if any Man was more than ordinarily qualified for a *Free-Thinker*, he that was the immediate Workmanship of God Almighty must be the Man. Now we'll see what becomes of this *Free-Thinker*; God had made him absolute Lord and Master of the Universe; all the Inhabitants of Air, Earth and Water, subject to his Despotick Will: But to let him know that he likewise had a Master, he reveals his Will to him in one short
Gen. 2. 16, 17. Command; *And the Lord God commanded the Man, saying of every Tree of the Garden, thou may'st freely eat: But of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely dye.* This Command was still the easier, because 'twas Negative. Here then was a Divine Revelation of the Mind and Will of God, which was, no doubt, communicated to the Woman as well as to the Man; tho' we read not of
Gen. 3. 2, 3. her Formation till Verse 21. But Chap. 3. when she comes to a Dialogue with the Devil, she uses the same Words which God had laid in Command on *Adam*: 'Tis true, there are likewise these following Words adjoyn'd, *Neither shall ye touch it, lest ye dye.* Whether these Words were a part of the Command, or whether they were invented by *Eve* to make the Command sound harsher than it really was, is not much to the present Purpose.

Having mention'd the Woman, I must be oblig'd to speak of her before I come to *Adam*; and I presume you will not be much offended with me, when I present you with the first *Free-Thinker* I ever read of in the World. After this Woman had ended her Conference with the Serpent, that is,

is, the Devil, who had told her a downright Lye, in Opposition to the reveal'd Will of God, she begins her *Free-Thinking*. (And here by the way I cannot but observe that the weakest Heads are most apt to lean to their own Understanding.) Thus *Eve*, ver. 6. when the Woman *saw that the Tree was good for Food*, and that it *was pleasant to the Eyes*, and a Tree to be desired to make one wise, *she took of the Fruit thereof, and did eat*. Now I would fain know how the Woman came to understand the Fruit had all these good Qualities before ever she had tasted it; in short, this could be nothing else but the Effect of *Free-Thinking*. Having said thus much of *Eve*, I have less to say of *Adam*, their Crime was much the same; she gave also unto her Husband with her, *and he did eat*. They — 3. 6. had both a reveal'd Command, and they both trangress'd it; they were both *Free-Thinkers*, and both Guilty of the grossest Error, and the Misery they brought on themselves and their Posterity, is too evident to be enlarg'd on. And thus I have made good the second Assertion: And I have the longer insisted on this Story of our first Parents, because there are several prophane Persons and Scoffers at Religion, who would insinuate that this Crime was but a trivial Offence to incur such a Penalty. But whosoever rightly weighs and considers the Matter, in what a State of Perfection this first Couple were created, with what enlarged Faculties of Souls, as well as vigorous Constitution, with what entire Freedom from all those Frailties, Letts, and Impediments, which we their sickly Progeny are liable to; let him consider likewise the Easiness of the Command; (which as I observed before was purely negative) let him consider, I say, all this, with those other Advantages their bounteous Creator bestow'd on

 them,

ıſt, as [illegible] the Creatures, *&c.* an[illegible]
ıe will find the greateſt Pride and Arrogance (th[illegible]
true Characters of *Free-Thinkers*) the vileſt Baſe
neſs and Ingratitude, the moſt ſtupid Unbelie[illegible]
with all other aggravating Circumſtances 'tis poſ-
ſible for a Crime to be made up with; ſo that no-
thing but the infinite Kindneſs of an Almighty
Benign Being, could ever have taken Compaſſion
on ſuch rebellious Wretches; a Compaſſion as un-
conceivable as Infinity it ſelf; a Compaſſion that
makes Mankind capable of a better State than
that from which his Folly had caſt him down.
However, theſe are not to go altogether unpu-
niſhed, the Scene muſt now be changed, *Eden*
muſt be no longer the pleaſant Abode of ſuch
corrupted Natures. And here we ſhall ſee the
wiſe Diſpenſation of Providence, in fitting their
Puniſhment agreeable to their Crime, and the
State they had brought themſelves into. The Wo-
man for her hankring after ſenſual Delights is pu-
Gen. 3 16. niſh'd with *the Sorrow and Pains* of Child-bearing;
this is the firſt Part: Her Puniſhment ſeems to be
1 Tim 2. the greater, as being firſt *in the Tranſgreſſion*;
the remaining Part is, that *her Deſire ſhall be to her
Husband, and he ſhall rule over her*: And what more
reaſonable than that ſhe who knew not how to
govern her ſelf ſhould be ſubject to the Will of a-
nother.

Had Mankind never tranſgreſs'd, 'tis highly
probable the Earth would have brought forth of
its own Accord all things neceſſary for Suſtenance
and Delight; *Adam* would have had little elſe to do
more than to have ador'd his Creator, and con-
templated the Works of Providence; and by thus
enlarging his Faculties he might poſſibly in time
have arrived to a kind of ſpiritual Being: But
now the Caſe is ſtrangely alter'd with human Na-
ture,

ture, and that which might have been the greatest Benefit to Man in a State of Innocence, would now prove the greatest Curse. Idleness is very inconsistent with depraved Natures. This God Almighty well knew, and proportion'd Man's Punishment accordingly. *Cursed is the Ground for thy Sake, in Sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life. Thorns also and Thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the Herb of the Field. In the Sweat of thy Face shalt thou eat Bread.* Gen. 3. 17, 18, 19.

Whoever considers seriously the present State of the World, will find it full of all manner of Wickedness: Violence or Deceit does almost every where abound; and yet if possible 'twould be ten times worse than it is, did not the Exigencies of Man find him Employment. The Fertility of the antediluvian World, gave Men great Leisure to injure and oppress one another, which they improv'd so well, that God Almighty's Patience would no longer bear with that wicked Generation. If we look on the World as now it is, we shall see Vice and Corruption most prevailing in the most pleasant and fertile Situations. That little Virtue which remains can scarce find an Abode, except in barren Countries and Desarts. If we consider farther, we may likewise observe the greatest Heresies and ill-grounded Opinions have taken their Rise from Men's wanting something to do: And I dare be bold to aver there's scarce a *Free-Thinker* in all this Kingdom but has his Time lie upon his Hands. Gen. 6. 3 7.

I need make no Apology for having been thus long on this Subject, since this great Article, the Fall of Man, is accounted both by *Jews* and *Christians* the Foundation of all true Religion.

might [illegible] to *Cain*, the second Man and the first Murderer, and shew how he was likewise a *Free-Thinker*, having had a reveal'd Law from God, and yet would follow his own perverse
Gen. 4. 6, 7. Will, and wicked Inclination; but I pass him by, and so I do all the old World, and likewise all those of the New, till I come to *Abraham* the
Gen. 12 1. Father of the Faithful. Now to this Man God says, *Get thee out of thy Country, and from thy Kindred, and from thy Father's House, into a Land that I will shew thee.* What Property he had in that Country, we read *Acts* 7. 5. *And he gave him no Inheritance in it, no not so much as to set his Foot on; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a Possession, and to his Seed after him, when as yet he had no Child.* How many *Free-Thinkers* should we have found to have gone on such an Errand? Would they not have argued thus? What, shall I leave my own native Country, to ramble I know not whither? Shall I part with a Certainty for an Uncertainty? Shall I take a last Farewell of all my pleasant Companions and intimate Associates, to embrace the Company of Savages? And so on. Now let us observe what is recorded of *Abraham*'s Conduct in this whole Affair, which will be an admirable Pattern for all *Free-Thinkers*: In
Gen. 15 6. the first Place it is said, *He believed in the Lord, and* it was *counted to him for Righteousness.* The same is likewise attested, *Rom.* 4. 13. And he is so far from questioning God's Promise, that he is looking
— 15. 2. out for an Heir: *And Abraham said, Lord God, what*
3. *wilt thou give me, seeing I go Childless, and the Steward of my House is this Eliezer of Damascus?* Which if he had no Child must have been his Heir, as appears by the following Verse. But God tells
4 him, *This shall not be thine Heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own Bowels shall be thine Heir.* Now what

what says *Abraham* to this? Why, you are told *he considered not his own Body now Dead, when he was about an Hundred Years old, neither yet the Deadness of Sarah's Womb: He staggered not at the Promise of God, through Unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God; and being fully perswaded that what he had promised he was able to perform; and therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness.* 'Tis true, *Sarah* argues after another sort, and like a right *Free-Thinker*, beginning with a Laugh. *Therefore Sarah laughed within her self, saying, After I am waxed old, shall I have Pleasure, my Lord being old also?* But 'tis very probable upon the Rebuke of the Angel, which you find in the following Verses, she immediately repented, since 'tis recorded of her, that, *through Faith also Sarah her self received Strength to conceive Seed, and was delivered of a Child when she was past Age, because she judged him Faithful who had promised.*

Rom. 4. 19, 20, 21, 22.

Gen. 18. 12.

Heb. 11. 11.

The next Thing I shall observe in this Good Man (who had the Honour to be call'd *the Friend of God*) is his Behaviour upon the offering up his Son *Isaac*: God had commanded him to take his Son, his only Son *Isaac*, whom he loved, and go into the Land of *Moriah*, and offer him there for a Burnt-offering upon one of the Mountains. Strange Command! What would a *Free-Thinker* have said to this? That a Father should be commanded not only to give up his Son to Death, but to slay him with his own Hands; not only to be a Spectator, but to be the Actor in this Tragedy. What Father would not shrink and start back at such a Command, especially if he believed with *Abraham*, that in the Seed of this Victim, who is now going to be sacrificed, all the Nations of the Earth should be Blessed, the Promise being expressly

Jam. 2. 23.

Gen. 22. 2.

presly limited to *Isaac* and his Posterity, who had then no Son. Now we shall see the Constancy and Resolution of this Pious Man to obey God, notwithstanding the harshness and difficulty of the
Gen. 22. 6. thing: *He took the Wood of the Burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his Son; and he took the fire in his hand,*
9. *and a knife: and they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an Altar there, and laid the Wood in order; and bound Isaac his Son, and laid him on the*
10. *Altar upon the Wood; and stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his Son*; and seems as it were
11. surprized with the Angel for not suffering him to do it. Now 'tis to be observed, that this Constancy of *Abraham*'s Faith was not an obstinate and stubborn Persuasion, but the Result of the wisest Reasoning, and sobereſt Consideration; for
Heb. 11. he counted and reason'd with himself, *that God*
19. *was able to raise him up, even from the dead. From whence also he received him in a Figure.* And here we have stated a true and just Notion of *Free-Thinking*; for *Free-Thinking* in general is not to be condemn'd, as has been already shewn; No, that would be to hoodwink Reason, and to render the noblest Faculties of the Soul altogether uselesſ; and a ready way to reinstate that Idolatrous superstitious Worship, which once we had Reason to hope would never have troubl'd us again.

'Tis to *Free-Thinking* we owe our Deliverance from Popery; 'Tis upon this Foundation the whole Reformation stands. Had not Men made use of their Reason, and a Freedom of Judging of the several dark Passages of Scripture, as well as the Authority of the whole; *This is my Body*, and such other like Figurative Expressions might have pass'd in the absurd and literal Sense unto the World's End.

The

The *Free-Thinking* I am contending with, is that wherein foolish Man would seem wiser than his Maker; Where Humane Reason shall be advanced in Opposition to Divine Revelation; where Men shall receive or reject, not upon the Authority of the Revealer, but as shall consist with their own Fancies, and wild Imaginations: And that this may justly be charged upon the *Free-Thinkers* I am now disputing with, will more fully appear in the Sequel.

I must here take notice, that some Passages above-mention'd, in relation to *Abraham*'s Conduct in sacrificing his Son *Isaac*, are Quotations from the Works of that Great Man A. Bishop *Tillotson*; which, I presume, you will not like the worse for being his, since you are pleas'd to call him the Head of your Party. But what just Foundation there is for this strict Alliance and Familiarity between ye, shall be a little better examin'd into before we part.

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I now proceed to the Method I first laid down, to shew, That whosoever shall wilfully depart from a Divine Revelation, to follow his own corrupt Reason, is guilty of the grossest Absurdity, and brings on himself the utmost Misery. In order to this, the next *Free-Thinker* I present you with shall be *Saul*, the first King of *Israel*. This Man going about to find his Father's Asses, meets with a Kingdom: which you may read at large 1 *Sam.* 9. 10. After *Samuel* had anointed him, he foretells of several Encounters he should meet with when he was departed from him: As, that he should meet with *two Men by Rachel's Sepulchre*, who should tell him *the Asses were found*; and that he should meet with *three Men going up to Bethel*, and should receive Bread at their hands; after he should *meet a Company of Prophets*; and that *the Spirit of the Lord should*

1 Sam. 10. 2. 3. 4. 5.

6. *should come upon him* likewise, and he should *prophesie, and be turned into another Man.* The Occasion of all this seems to be, that *Saul* should understand that *Samuel* was the Lord's Prophet; and that the Anointing was likewise of the Lord. After this
8. *Samuel* tells him, *he should go down before him to Gilgal*; and that he would *come down to him, and offer burnt-offerings, and sacrifice peace-offerings*; and that *Saul* should *tarry for him seven days.* Now we will
13. 5. consider the Behaviour of *Saul:* It seems the *Philistines* had made War upon him; the seventh day was arriv'd, *Samuel* not come, (tho' it will appear he did come within the Time appointed;) *Saul*
9. grows impatient; invades the Priest's Office; of-
10. fers a Burnt-offering; as soon as he had made an
11. end, *Samuel* appears, asks him what he had done? Why, *Saul* indeed has little to say; he tells *Samuel* that the People were scattered from him; and that he likewise had not kept his Time; That the *Philistines* were gathered together to *Michmash.* And
12. now he comes to his *Free-Thinking: Therefore said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the Lord: I forced my self therefore, and offered a burnt-offering.* I believe there are very few *Free-Thinkers* that have so much to say for themselves, as *Saul* does in this
13. place. But what says the Prophet; *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: Thou hast not kept the Commandments of the Lord thy God which he*
14. *commanded thee; for now would the Lord have established thy Kingdom upon Israel for ever: but now thy Kingdom shall not continue.*

It seems God Almighty was pleased to make a farther Tryal of this Man; accordingly he is sent
1 Sam. 15. to smite *Amaleck*, and utterly destroy all they had;
3. to spare neither Man nor Woman, Infant or Suckling, Ox or Sheep, Camel or Ass, in this Expedition.

dition. We ſhall find he acquits himſelf worſe than ever he had done before; and this is chiefly owing to this *Free-Thinking*: For tho' the Prophet had poſitively commanded him to *ſpare neither Man nor Beaſt*, yet firſt he takes *Agag the King of the Amalekites alive*, then ſpares *the beſt of the Sheep, and of Oxen, of the Fatlings, and the Lambs*; and this under pretence of *Sacrificing to the Lord*. But this Shew of Religion would not ſerve his Turn; the Prophet asks him, *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and ſacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice; and to hearken then the fat of Rams: Becauſe thou haſt rejected the Word of the Lord, he alſo hath rejected thee from being King*. Here we may ſee *Saul*'s erroneous Way of Arguing againſt a Divine Command, and likewiſe what followed thereupon; *viz.* the utter Rejection of him and his Family. Surely *Saul* was as little Prieſt-ridden as any of the *Free-Thinkers* of our Days; he needed no Confeſſor to ſtir him up to Acts of Barbarity; the Murthering *the Prieſts of the Lord* proceeded purely from his own wicked and cruel Heart: And 'tis obſervable he could find none of his own People would undertake this bloody Act, and was forc'd to make uſe of a Foreigner: by which it appears the Clergy were not then altogether ſo contemptible as they have been rendred in theſe latter Times.

8. 9. 21. 22. 23. 1 Sam. 22. 16, 18.

I ſhall proceed now to *Jeroboam*, and ſo ſhall draw to a Concluſion of the preſent Argument. This *Jeroboam* was a Servant of King *Solomon*'s; and upon his Maſters falling from God, and becoming an Idolater, he had ten Tribes given him. The Prophet *Ahiga* likewiſe told him, that if he would *hearken to all the Commandments of God*, and

1 Kings 11. 26. ver. 30, 31. 38.

would *walk in his ways, and keep his statutes*, &c. that *God would be with him, and build him a sure House, and would give Israel unto him.* Some time after this *Solomon* dies, and upon the foolish Con-
1 Kings 12. duct of his Son *Rehoboham*, *Jeroboam* is made King
20. of ten Tribes. Now what does this wretched Man do, but immediately becomes a *Free-Thinker*
26. For thus he is said to argue, *And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the Kingdom return to the House of*
27. *David: If this people go up to sacrifice in the House of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the hearts of this people turn again to their Lord, even to Rehoboham, King of Judah; and they shall kill me, and go again to Re-*
28. *hoboham King of Judah. Whereupon the King took counsel, and made two Calves of Gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy Gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the Land*
29. *of Egypt. And he set one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan.* What a Sot has this Man made of himself by his *Free-Thinking*? As if that God, who would not suffer their most inveterate Enemies to invade them, during their Festivals at *Jerusalem*, could not as easily have retained the Hearts of his Subjects in Obedience to him. Another of
31. *Jeroboam*'s Crimes, was making Priests of the lowest of the People which were not of the Sons of *Levi*; but this is a Fault which, I make no doubt, but the Author of *the Rights of the Christian Church* will easily forgive him: However, these Sins were the utter Ruin of *Jeroboam* and all his Posterity; and likewise of all the succeeding Kings of *Israel* who trod in his steps: They were all *Free-Thinkers* like himself; rejecting the Counsel of God, and leaning to their own Understanding; which they continued to do till *Shalmanesser*, King of *Assyria*, took *Hoshea* the King, and with him the ten Tribes, and carried them into Captivity.

The

The last *Free-Thinker* I shall at present take notice of is *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*. This Man, as you say of *Socrates*, not only disbelieved the Gods of his own Country, but I may add likewise, the Gods of all other Countries besides: 'Tis true, he made him a very fine magnificent God, tall enough to overlook the capacious Plain of *Dura*: And although he oblig'd all Nations, Languages, *&c.* to worship this Golden Image, I do not find he car'd much for him himself: It has been the Custom of many Ancient, as well as Modern Tyrants, who have had very little Religion or Common Honesty themselves, to impose one Sett Way of Worship (and that none of the best neither) on all they can bring under their Subjection; judging perhaps they can never be secure of Men's Bodies, unless they can manacle their Consciences. Let them therefore who are free from such Tyrants, preserve their Liberty as long as they can. Dan. 3. 1.

But, to return to *Nebuchadnezzar*, the Prophet *Daniel* reveals and interprets to him his first Dream, wherein the *Image's Head was of fine Gold, his Breasts and his Arms of Silver, his Belly and his Thighs of Braß, his Legs of Iron, his Feet part of Iron, and part of Clay.* This Vision foretold the several great Monarchies of the World, and the Confusion that should follow after the Dissolution of the last; too much of which has reach'd down even to our own Times; it being impossible the Iron and Clay should ever cement into one Body. *Nebuchadnezzar* did not seem much displeas'd at this Dream as long as he was the Golden Head; but not long after he dreams another Dream, which *terrifies him exceedingly*; as you may read *Dan.*4.10. *Daniel* likewise interprets this Dream to him, and Dan.2.32. 33. 41. Dan. 4. 5.

advises him by a timely Repentance to prevent, if possible, what was doom'd to befal him. The King continues pensive for about a Twelvemonth, but could hold out no longer, and then like a
Dan. 4. 30, proud *Free-Thinker* thus he talks; *Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the House of the Kingdom, by the Might of my Power, and for the Honour of my*
31, *Majesty?* Now let's see what follows: *While the Word was in the King's Mouth there fell a Voice from Heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, the Kingdom is departed from thee, and they shall drive thee from Men, and thy Dwelling shall be with*
32, *the Beasts of the Field: They shall make thee eat Grass as Oxen, and seven Times shall pass over thee untill thou know that the most High ruleth the Kingdoms of Men,*
33. *and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same Hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar.*

It will not be amiss in this Place, to reflect a little on *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Crimes and Punishments. His Crime no doubt was excessive Pride, and very probably joyn'd with Atheism. Some are of Opinion the golden Image he set up was a Representation of himself, and whether *viro immortale*, or words to that Effect, be Part of the Inscription, or whether it had any Inscription at all is not much worth our while to enquire after; the best that can be thought of him, is his being of the *Stoick* Sect, who as you say, deny'd the Immortality of the Soul; tho indeed we have no Account of that Sect of Philosophers till long after his time; yet no doubt but the Opinion was much ancienter than we read of: Now what more suitable a Punishment for a proud Man than to be brought low; and that he who denying a Future Being sets himself on the Level with Beasts, should be oblig'd to abandon Humanity, and keep Company with his Fellow-Brutes.

I might

I might now go on and ſhew that all wicked Men and bloody Tyrants, that have lived in the ſeveral Ages and Countries of the World, whether in *Aſia*, *Africa*, *Greece*, *Peloponeſus*, *Sicily*, *Rome*, &c. from the time of this *Nebuchadnezzar* to the great Oppreſſor of our Days, have been all unlimited *Free-Thinkers* (or what is the Reverſe to it and altogether as bad) no Thinkers at all. But enough has been ſaid on this Subject, and I hope I have ſufficiently made good what I propos'd to do in the beginning, *viz.* That no Man could think or act, as he ought to do in Matters of Religion, without the Aſſiſtance of Divine Revelation; and likewiſe that wereſoever a Divine Revelation is vouchſaf'd, and Men ſhall wilfully act contrary thereto, they are guilty of the groſſeſt Error, and bring the utmoſt Miſery on themſelves.

I ſhould now proceed to examine the Liſt of *Free-Thinkers* you have given us at the cloſe of your Book, and ſee how fairly you have dealt with the World and them in the Characters you have given them. But I ſhall firſt ſpeak to an Objection which may poſſibly be offer'd. It may be ſaid then, Why all this ado about Divine Revelation? Does any of us deny it? Do not we ſpeak very reverently of God, of our Bleſſed Saviour, the Holy Scriptures, *&c.*? To this I anſwer, 'tis true, theſe are Words we often find in your Books, but if we take the whole Scheme together, we ſhall find the Graſs not high enough to cover the Snake; and when you are pleas'd to ſpeak thus favourably of Religion, I cannot but think of ſome certain Men in the World, who upon Occaſion will ſpeak very ſtrenuouſly for the Intereſt of a certain Family, when their Conduct ſhall render it ſuſpe-

ſuſpected, they have nothing leſs at their Hearts. And that this is parrallel to your Caſe, I am afraid will too manifeſtly appear in what follows. In the mean time I ask you this fair Queſtion, If you have that Reverence and Honour for our Bleſſed Saviour and his Doctrine, you pretend to have, why then are his Miniſters treated with that Ignominy and Contempt; ſince he has plainly ſaid, *he that deſpiſes you, deſpiſes me?* Why, I ſay, are the whole Body of the Clergy us'd like a Pack of Scoundrels? Why are you ſo highly pleas'd if you can pick ap any thing, either ancient or modern, that tends to their Diſreputation? To what End and Purpoſe do you weed Authors (if I may uſe that Word) to find out ſuch notable Sayings, as *Idiotis Evangeliſtis*; and theſe Words muſt be inſerted in Capital Letters leſt your Pupils ſhould not obſerve them; tho I muſt tell ye *Idiotis* has not that Signification you would pretend to put upon us: I ſay to what Purpoſe is all this, but to ſhew your profound Reſpect for the Apoſtles the Meſſengers of Chriſt. No wonder then the modern Clergy find no better Quarter. It muſt be confeſs'd there are amongſt them ſome raſh inconſiderate Men, who often talk of what they do not underſtand; 'tis to be fear'd likewiſe there are too many not only ignorant but of ſcandalous Lives and Converſations. The firſt of theſe Faults is chiefly owing to the Narrowneſs of Education, and to thoſe erroneous Principles many of them imbibe at their firſt ſetting out; ſo that if it be a Man of Senſe that comes up to this Town, where he has the Advantage of a free Converſation; 'tis ſome time before he can diſengage himſelf of thoſe political Maxims which firſt ſeiz'd on him; if he be a Man of no great

Luk. 10. 16.

great Depth, and has more Heat than Brain (as it too often happens) a thousand to one but these Errors accompany him to his dying Day. 'Tis this renders them (frequently speaking) very unfit to meddle inCivil Affairs,tho 'tis as certain they have a very greatItch towards it. But after all has been said, 'tis very unjust a whole Body of Men should be charg'd, and arraign'd, and condemn'd for the Defects of a Part. This you would think a very unreasonable way of arguing in any other Case: As for Example, should any Man say because that great *Free-Thinker* (your very good Friend) *Thomas Hobbes* of *Malmsbury* (as 'tis said) died an Atheist, *Ergo*, all *Free-Thinkers* are to be esteemed as such ; you would hardly consent this to be a right way of Reasoning. Why then do you do to others what you would not have done to your selves. I think, I can say, I am as little Priest-ridden, or as unapt to pin my Faith on another's Sleeve as any other Man. But I will venture to affirm there was never a better Set of Bishops ever adorn'd the *English* Church than what we have at this Day. And we have likewise a great many Worthy Men of the inferior Clergy. Of both Ranks many have manifested themselves not only Eminent Churchmen , but likewise good *Englishmen*, who have confuted those senseless, as well as slavish Doctrines, of a blind unlimited Obedience ; and have made it appear that Men may be very good Christians without parting with their Civil Rights. — 'Tis true, (to our great Grief) these have hapned to be far the lesser Number ; which is no strange thing, when Reason and Interest cannot go Hand in Hand, but must unfortunately divide.

But

But if a Man was throughly to examine into this Matter, he would find, I am afraid, ſome other Reaſons, beſides what we have mentioned, why the Miniſters of God's Word are ſo hardly dealt with. I will venture to give my Opinion, and I could wiſh with all my Heart I might be in the wrong. If theſe Miniſters then do their Duty, they muſt let Man know what he is; That he is an accountable Creature, and not his own Maſter: That this Body of his, which he is now ſo fond of, and does often uſe ſuch indirect Methods to pamper and pleaſe, muſt, in a very little time, ſink down to its original Duſt, and be an Habitation for Worms, and a Scene of Rottenneſs: That the Soul muſt return to God who gave it, and there be forc'd to abide the ſtricteſt and ſevereſt Inqueſt: That Men ſhall be rewarded and puniſh'd according as they have behav'd themſelves in this State of Probation: That the Proud and the Vain-glorious, and the Ambitious, and Voluptuous, ſhall never be admitted into Heaven: That no *Whoremonger, Adulterer, unclean Perſon, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Revilers, and ſuch like*, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt: That Faith and Repentance, and Obedience are the indiſpenſible Terms of the Goſpel. In ſhort, that thoſe that would be Chriſt's Diſciples muſt deny themſelves, take up the Croſs, and follow him. Theſe, 'tis to be doubted, are the hard Sayings, who can bear them? Theſe, and ſuch like Doctrines as theſe, coſt the Prophets and Apoſtles, and Primitive Fathers their Lives; and good Men in all Ages have, and 'tis to be fear'd, ever will ſuffer for them, to the End of the World.

Eccl. 12. 7.

Gal. 5. 19.

Eph. 5. 3.

I ſhall now take ſome Examination of your *Free-Thinkers*, and make ſome Remarks on what you

you ſay of them. And I begin with *Socrates*. This Divine Man, (as you call him) you are not content to make the beſt of the Heathen World, (which for ought I know he might be) but he muſt be likewiſe ſet in Competition with Chriſtians, and have the Precedence given him ; afterwards you are pleas'd to tell us his Religion : And pray what is it ? Why, truly he demonſtrated all Men to be Fools who troubled themſelves with Enquiries into heavenly Things, *&c.* An admirable Scheme indeed ; and no doubt your Pupils will be highly delighted with it. No wonder your Sect riſes and grows up ſo faſt, as you tell us it does in your Title Page : But how *Socrates* could be ſo great a *Free-Thinker*, and yet have his Thoughts confin'd to this little dirty Planet, is what I do not well underſtand. —— There's no Man has a juſter Value for the Heathen Philoſophers than my ſelf : I read their Books with a great deal of Delight and Satisfaction, eſpecially when I conſider that God never left himſelf without ſome Witneſs, but always vouchſaf'd ſome kind of Light to the World. —— But when we ſhall pretend to compare the Writings and Sayings of theſe Men to the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, we diſcover both our Impiety and Folly ; there were ſcarce any of theſe Philoſophers that were conſiſtent with themſelves; (I have ſaid ſomething of *Socrates* already) and although they laid down very good Rules, they were very bad Followers of them. *Cicero* the greateſt Man of his time, who had wrote ſo well for Fortitude, Magnanimity, and the like, died like an errand Coward. *Seneca* declaims admirably well againſt Riches, and yet ſcrap'd up all he could get together. How unlike are theſe Men to the Apoſtles and

Diſc. of Free-Thinking Pag. 123.

Pag. 125.

Primitive Fathers, whose Doctrines, Lives and Deaths were all of a Piece?

But to go a little further, suppose I could make a shift to rub through the World with this Philosophical Scheme, and pretty quietly to bear the Shocks of Fortune, with all other Evils incident to Human Life; pray, what Comfort do they give me when I come to an End of all these, when I come to lay down this House of Clay? Truly, very little; some of them have made pretty good Guesses at the Soul's Immortality, and of the Reward of good Men, and the Punishment of the Bad, in another State; but it must be acknowledged all this has been with a great deal of Uncertainty. Can all they have ever said, give me that Satisfaction as one single Text in the New Testament, 2 *Cor.* 5. 1. *For we know, that if our earthly House of this Tabernacle were dissolved, we have a Building of God, an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens?* Can all that *Epictetus* has wrote with so much Subtilty, to prove Pain to be no Evil, ever alleviate my Grief like another Text? 2 *Cor.* 4. 17. *For our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory?* The best that can be said of the Consolations drawn from Philosophy, is, They are many of them pleasant and pretty, and fit enough to entertain and divert a Man's Mind under a slight Trouble; but they are too speculative, and refin'd for common Capacity, too thin and weak to bear any great Stress, and to support and relieve a Man's Mind under a sore and heavy Affliction: But this is a Consideration which hath Strength and Substance in it, That all things will end in our unspeakable Happiness,

pineſs, and that this Happineſs ſhall have no End. As ſays an excellent Author.

And as the Chriſtian Religion gives a Man the greateſt Comfort at Death, ſo 'tis the moſt perfect Rule of Life that has ever yet been taught. If you will believe the Man you ſo much commend, the late Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*, he ſays *Vol.* XI. *Pag.* 122. " That the Precepts of the Chriſtian " Religion are a plain and perfect Rule of all " Virtue and Goodneſs, and the beſt and moſt " abſolute Syſtem of moral Philoſophy that ever " was in the World, containing all the Rules of " Virtue and a good Life, which are ſcattered " and diſpers'd in the Writings of the Philoſo- " phers, and the Wiſe Men of all Ages, and de- " livering them to us with greater Clearneſs and " Certainty, in a more ſimple and unaffected " Manner, with greater Authority, Force, and " Efficacy upon the Mind, than any Philoſopher " and Lawgiver ever did; teaching us how to " worſhip God in the beſt manner, and moſt ſui- " table to his Nature and Perfections; how to " demean our ſelves towards others with all " Meekneſs and Humility, Juſtice and Integrity, " Kindneſs and Charity; and how to govern our " ſelves and our own unruly Appetites and Paſſi- " ons, and to bring them within the Bounds of " Reaſon, much better than any Law or Inſti- " tution that ever was in the World ". For Shame then make no more vile Compariſons, nor ſeek to leſſen what you ſo little underſtand.

The fine Things you ſay of *Epicurus* is no doubt to recommend his Doctrine to your Followers, but you ſhew your Impiety as well as Ignorance, when you give the Pre-eminence of the *Epicurean* Friendſhip to that contain'd in the Ho-

ly Scriptures, and when you aſſert our holy Religion itſelf does not any where particularly require of us that Virtue; I cannot but ſtand in Admiration to think how groſsly ſome Men would impoſe upon the World: Is not Love the higheſt Degree of Friendſhip? Is there any Book in the World does ſo zealouſly recommend that Virtue as the New Teſtament? Has not the Evangeliſt St. *John* wrote almoſt a whole Epiſtle on that very Subject? Beſides, is there any Story now extant in the World (unleſs what is fictitious) comparable to the Friendſhip of *David* and *Jonathan*: *Jonathan* is ſaid to have loved *David, as he loved his own Soul*? He underwent not only his Father's high Diſpleaſure, but the Loſs of the Kingdom for the Love he bare him. And yet we are told the Love of *David* exceeded. What a ſilly Diſtinction do you make betwixt the Words Friend and Friendſhip, as if there could be one without the other?

1 *Epiſtle* St. John.

1 Sam. 20. 17. 30, 31.

I ſhall paſs on now to *Cicero*, but ſhall ſay little of him, having already ſpoken as much as is ſufficient of Philoſophers. I ſhall only take notice you have not dealt very fairly with him, in making the World believe he deny'd the Immortality of the Soul. In his Book *de Senectute*, he declares his own Opinion of it, where ſpeaking to *Scipio* and *Lælius*, he ſays, I do not ſee why I may not adventure to declare freely to you what my Thoughts are concerning Death; and perhaps I may diſcern better than others what it is, becauſe I am now, by Reaſon of my Age, not far from it. I believe, ſays he, that the Fathers, thoſe eminent Perſons, and my particular Friends, are ſtill alive, and they live the Life which only deſerves the Name of Life. And afterwards, *Nec*

me solum ratio ac disputatio imputit, ut ita crederem, sed nobilitas etiam summorum Philosophorum & authoritas. Nor has Reason only and Disputation brought me to this Belief, but the famous Judgment and Authority of the chief Philosophers, of whom he mentions *Pythagoras*, *Socrates*, and *Plato*; and then breaks out into this Rapture, *Oh præclarum diem, quam in illud animorum concilium cælumque proficiscar & cum ex hâc turbiâ & colluvione discedam*! O glorious Day, when I shall go unto the great Council and Assembly of Spirits, when I shall go out of this Tumult and Confusion, and quit the Sink of this World, and meet with *Cato* the greatest and best of Mankind. Your Friend Archbishop *Tillotson* says, A Christian could hardly have spoke with more Extacy. And is it likely this great Philosopher died an Atheist? The same Archbishop likewise says, The *Stoicks* were very inclinable to the Belief of a Future State, tho' they spake doubtfully of it. Which is another Point in which you and he differ. But what do I talk of *Cicero*, when a greater than *Cicero* finds no better Treatment at your Hands? *Solomon*, the Wisest of Men, is represented by you, not only as a Fatalist, believing the Eternity of the World, but likewise denying the Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State. And this your Assertion is grounded on *Eccles.* 1. 4,5,6,7,9. where he says, *One Generation passes away, and another Generation cometh; but the Earth abideth for ever:* and so on. And on *Eccles.* 3. 18--22. where 'tis said, *As the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a Man hath no pre-eminence above a Beast*, &c.

Ser. Vol. 9. *p.* 102.

Discourse of Free-Thinking *p.*151,152.

Now you and I who are Lay-Men, when we find a Text obscure, and may thereby be led into an Error

Error (which may happen more than once) ſhould do well to examine what goes before, or what follows after, which may poſſibly ſet us in a true Light. If you had taken this Method, 'tis to be hop'd you would not have pretended thus groſsly to impoſe upon the World; but whether this be ignorantly or deſignedly, I cannot tell. Had you ever read *Solomon*'s Proverbs, you would have found, *Prov.* 8. 22. he brings in *Wiſdom*, ſpeaking after another ſort: *The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, before his Works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from the beginning, or ever the Earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there was no Fountains abounding with Water. Before the Mountains were ſettled; before the Hills was I brought forth: While as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the Fields, nor the higheſt part of the Duſt of the World. When he prepared the Heavens, I was there: when he ſet a compaſs upon the face of the Depth: When he eſtabliſhed the Clouds above: when he ſtrengthened the Fountains of the Deep: When he gave to the Sea his Decree, that the Waters ſhould not paſs his Commandment: when he appointed the Foundations of the Earth: Then I was by him*; and ſo on. Is this talking like a Fataliſt? Scarce does *Moſes* himſelf give a more particular Account of the Making of the World. Again, had you read the two laſt Chapters of *Eccleſiaſtes*, you would have found, that for all the Follies of his Youth, the Young-man ſhall be brought to Judgment; and that when *the Duſt ſhall return to the Earth as it was, the Spirit ſhall return to God who gave it.* How is it poſſible to find Words can better expreſs a Future State, as likewiſe the Soul's Immortality? But what is ſtill more abſurd, you bring in this Wiſeſt of Men reaſoning like the *Sadducees*, which you call the moſt

Pag. 152, 153.

moſt Philoſophical Part of the *Jewiſh* Nation. *Joſephus* gives us quite another Account of them; He ſays they were of a Savage Humour, behaving themſelves with great Rudeneſs towards one another as well as unto Strangers. But pray how comes *Solomon* to argue like the *Sadduces*? Do we find any mention of them in his Reign, or for a great many Generations after? If he talks like them, it muſt be by the Spirit of Prophecy; and then we muſt argue thus: *Solomon, to whom God gave Wiſdom and Underſtanding, exceeding much, and largeneſs of Heart, even as the Sand on the Sea-ſhore. Solomon, that ſpake three thouſand Proverbs: That ſpake of Trees, from the Cedar-tree in Lebanon, even unto the Hyſſop that ſpringeth out of the Wall:* This very *Solomon* Talks and Reaſons likewiſe like an impious erroneous Sect, which he ſaw would ſpring up ſome Hundred Years after he had lain in his Grave. I do agree with you, that the Immortality of the Soul was not, by many Degrees, ſo clearly revealed in the Old Teſtament as in the New; but that the *Jews* did believe it; and likewiſe a Future State, is beyond all Contradiction: *The Sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulneſs hath ſurpriſed the Hypocrites: Who among us ſhall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us ſhall dwell with everlaſting burnings?* How abſurd is it to imagine the *Jews*, to whom were committed the Oracles of God, ſhould be ignorant of what might be known by the Light of Nature? The Belief of the Divine Perfections, of the Infinite Goodneſs, and Wiſdom, and Power, and Truth, and Juſtice, and Purity of the Divine Nature; a firm Perſuaſion of his Providence, that he governs and adminiſters the Affairs of the World, and takes notice of the Actions of Men, and will call them to an Account for

Joſeph. Lib. de bello, cap. 12. lib. 13.

1 Kings 4. 29, 32, 33.

Iſa. 33. 14.

for them; of the Immortality of our Souls, and their endless Duration after Death, and consequently of the Eternal Rewards and Punishments of another Life. These are the great Principles of Natural Religion, which Mankind are in some measure possest with, and persuaded of, without any External Revelation from God; says that Excellent Prelate Archbishop *Tillotson*.

And here I cannot but observe how barbarously you have treated that Great Man, not only in stiling him your Head (an Honour I presume you would with great Difficulty have got him to accept of,) but likewise in representing him to the World in so unfair and unjust a manner.

P. 69. Disc. of *Free-Thinking*, you insinuate as tho' he call'd in question the Eternity of Hell-Torments; and this is grounded upon a Sermon on that Subject, publish'd in his Life-time. Now whoever will candidly read that Discourse, must conclude no such Inference can fairly be made, but the quite contrary will plainly appear: 'Tis true, he examines the Reasons some Men have given why those Punishments should be Eternal, which he finds unsatisfactory; and thereupon advances much better of his own; which is so far from denying that Doctrine, that it confirms it in the strongest manner, if it may be said any thing adds strength to Divine Authority. But to put this Matter quite out of Debate, I shall give you a Passage of his in another Sermon, *Vol.* XI. *Pag.* 124. where he says, "To think of lying "under the terrible Wrath and Displeasure of "Almighty God to Eternal Ages; of being ex-"tremely and for ever miserable, without inter-"mission, and without end, must needs be a very "dismal Consideration to any Man that can

"think

"think and consider: And yet to this horrible "Danger, to this intolerable Misery, do all the "Workers of Iniquity, every one that lives in "the wilful Contempt and Disobedience of the "Laws of the Gospel expose themselves, and is as "expressly revealed and declared to us, as it is "possible for Words to declare any thing." It has been peculiar to some Countries to Depreciate and Calumniate the most worthy and deserving Men. This is what has been particularly observed of the *Athenians*; yet they seldom fail'd to pay that Justice to their Memories, which was denied them whilst living.

I wish I could say the same of another Nation; but to our Eternal Shame and Reproach the quite contrary appears, and particularly in this Excellent Person I am speaking of; who, as a great Author observes, was persecuted by Malice to his Grave; and that has followed him ever since he was laid in the Dust.

And I may add, by not a few of his own Cloath, the best of whose Performances have been borrowed from his Works; from that noble Body of Sermons, the noblest this Nation, or perhaps the World ever saw; nor are the Panegyricks of some less Satyrical, than the Obloquy and Reproach of others; which made a certain noble *Athenian* (being in the midst of his Oration applauded by the Mob) stop and ask what Slip he had made that those People should commend him? The Application of this is easy. I remember some time since, another Sett of Men (and yet I know not whether I may call them another) paid the same awkard Courtship to this great Bishop. One of them a little after the Bishop's Decease, told me, had he liv'd a little longer, he did not doubt but

he would have ſet up the *Socinian* Doctrine, notwithſtanding he had publiſhed Six Sermons not long before to prove the contrary, which I perceived this Gentleman knew little of: Therefore to ſay no more of this Excellent good Man, who is now out of the Reach and Malice of Men's Tongues; were he now Alive, you muſt not have preſumed to have ſhelter'd your ſelves under that Venerable Name.

I ſhall now proceed to examine a few more of your Aſſertions, and then draw to a Concluſion. *Page* 153, you have theſe bold Words: "That "from the New Teſtament we know, that God "had but one Way to put Mankind in a Capa-"city of enjoying Immortal Happineſs, *viz.* by "ſending Jeſus Chriſt into the World." Now I muſt tell you, Gentlemen, there's no ſuch Doctrine to be found in the Old or New Teſtament: 'Tis true, the Love of God is there often magnified (and that very juſtly) in *ſending his Son into the World to ſave Sinners.* But to ſay he had no other Way to reſcue Mankind, is what the Holy Scriptures do no where affirm; nor does it become Finite Creatures to ſet Bounds to Omnipotence, or ſay what God cannot do.

I am come now to ſpeak of the Prophets, with whom you deal with as much Candor and Sincerity as you have done with the late Archbiſhop. You tell us they have written with as great Liberty againſt the Eſtabliſhed Religion of the *Jews* (which the People look'd on as the Inſtitution of God himſelf) as if they believ'd it was all Impoſture.

Surely

Surely you take this as a good Rule to be laid down; and if ſo, I cannot imagine how you can diſpleas'd with the Modern Clergy, whatever Doctrines they ſhould vent; the more inconſiſtent with the Eſtabliſhed Religion, the greater ſtill the *Free-Thinker.* But let's ſee how this Charge is made good: You quote ſeveral Texts of the Prophets, ſome of which are not to be found in the very Books themſelves; as particularly *Ezek.* 6. 20. where it happens the Chapter has but 14 Verſes; and not a Word there, nor in any other part of that Prophecy relating to the Incenſe from *Sheba*, or the ſweet Cane. Again, *Ezek.* 7. 22. your Quotation is not to be found in any part of that Chapter; nor likewiſe in that Book. *Jer.* 14. 4. has not a Word to your purpoſe. And now, Gentlemen, ſince your Book is ſo full of Quotations, if we may take theſe for a Sample, we need not be at much pains in examining the reſt. But not to inſiſt on theſe Errors, which perhaps may be owing to the Preſs: How does it appear the Prophets wrote againſt the Eſtabliſhed Religion? Is it becauſe they found Fault with the People for having moreRegard to Sacrifices and Ceremonies, and the External Obſervances, than to the inward and ſubſtantial Parts of Religion? This is no more than what our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf did, when he denounces that Wo againſt the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, Mat. 23. 23. *Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſes, Hypocrites; for ye pay Tythe of Mint and Aniſe, and Cummin, and have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith: Theſe ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.* 'Twas the neglect of moral Duties and Virtues (without the Performance of which,

all the reſt found no Acceptance with God,) that the Prophets ſo often complain'd of: Hence we find them ſo frequently bewailing, that their Religion was degenerated into Form and Ceremony, into Oblations and Sacrifices, the Obſervance of Faſts and Sabbaths, and new Moons, *&c.* but had no Power and Efficacy upon their Hearts and Lives. I could wiſh this was the Caſe of no other Church beſides that of the *Jews.* As to what you ſay of *Joſephus, Minutius Felix, Syneſius,* Mr. *Hobbes,* and ſome others, I ſhall only remark, That whoſoever ſhall declare againſt an Article of the Chriſtian Faith, or call in Queſtion any Part of Divine Revelation, is ſure to be a Favourite, and merit your utmoſt Commendation; on the contrary, he who ſhall lay down his Life for the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, muſt have no other Title to be called a Saint but his want of Learning, and Exceſs of Zeal, *Pag.* 162.

I cannot ſee any Reaſon why the People of the *Jews* ſhould be us'd by you in that contemptuous Manner, as the moſt illiterate, barbarous and ridiculous People, *Pag.* 157. It muſt be confeſs'd they were a very perverſe and ſtubborn Generation, ungrateful both to God and their Benefactors. But is there no Nation in the World may be compared with them? I doubt we need not go far to find one: A Nation that has received as eminent Favours from Almighty God as ever the *Jews* did, and has made as unworthy Returns. A Nation that *remembred not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the Hands of all their Enemies, on every Side: Neither ſhewed they Kindneſs*

to

to the House of Jerubbaal, namely, Gideon, according to all the Goodness which he had shewed unto Israel. Judg. 8. 34.35. A Nation that had it once in their own Power to have made themselves happy, but by their Follies 'tis fear'd have rendred themselves uncapable of Happiness. A Nation that *says to the Seers, See not; and to the Prophets, Prophesy not unto us right Things; speak unto us smooth Things, prophesy Deceits,* Isa. 30. 10. May it not be said of such a Nation as it was of the *Jews, they are sottish Children, and they have none Understanding: They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no Knowledge.* Jer. 4. 22. And may it not be fear'd likewise, *Therefore he that made them will not have Mercy on them, and he that formed them, will shew them no Favour.* Isa. 27. 11. But to go a little farther, A Nation, I say then, that has in these latter Days produc'd a Set of Men, who are asham'd to own the Designs they are carrying on; who after near seventeen hundred Years Illumination would carry us back to Chance, Atoms, Fatality, and I know not what; and place us in a worse Condition than the Heathen World, who wanted the necessary Means of Knowledge: A Set of Men who under pretence of *Free-Thinking* would teach Mankind to believe nothing: A Set of Men more injurious to the Community than *Tories, Jacobites, Non-Jurors, False Jurors, Tricksters, Sycophants,* and all such sort of Men put together: These can only deprive me of the Goods of Fortune, or at most of a Life, which were it not for the Hopes of a better, a wise Man would scarce think worth the having. Those would take from me not only that which can alone sweeten the Sorrows and Calamities incident to frail Humanity, but likewise that delightful Prospect of an

happier

happier State, which ſhall commence when this poor periſhing Life ſhall have an End.

To conclude with a brief Summary of what has been ſaid, I have in the firſt Place, not only allow'd but aſſerted the Duty of *Free-Thinking*, ſhewing wherein *Free-Thinking* conſiſts, and likewiſe ſome Qualifications néceſſary for a *Free-Thinker*. I have then ſhew'd you that without the Aſſiſtance of Divine Revelation no Man can think or act, as he ought to do, in religious Matters. I have in the next Place ſhewn, that whoſoever wilfully Reaſons or Acts contrary to Divine Revelation makes himſelf a very Fool and very miſerable. I have likewiſe ſhewn that the beſt Syſtems of the Heathen Philoſophy come infinitely ſhort of the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, either in regard of the Government of our Lives, or affording Comfort at the Hour of Death. And I am afraid I have likewiſe made it too evidently appear, that you *Free-Thinkers* who pretend to believe Divine Revelation, have nothing leſs at your Hearts; this has been done by ſhewing in what unſeemly manner you treat the Prophets and Apoſtles and thoſe that have followed them: In your miſrepreſenting many great and good Men who have liv'd in the ſeveral Ages of the World; in your magnifying and extolling thoſe who have deny'd the very Principles of Chriſtianity; and in reflecting on ſuch who have died for them. And I may further add, that you ſeldom or never make uſe of the Holy Scriptures but for banter or ridicule. I ſhall therefore take my leave of you for the preſent, with ſome of the Words of the Learned Serjeant *Parker*, now Lord Chief Juſtice

ſtice of *England*, at the Tryal of that hot-brain'd troubleſome Man, Doctor *Sacheverel*. " I am a-
" mazed, Men ſhould dare to take the tremen-
" dous Name of God into their Lips, when they
" can neither juſtify what they ſay, nor have Sin-
" cerity and Honeſty enough to repent and take
" Shame upon themſelves, and ask Pardon of
" God and the World.

London, *Feb.* 24. 171$\frac{2}{3}$.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

PAge 5. *Line* 11. inſtead of the Philoſopher *read*, of Philoſophers. *P.* 7. *L.* 27. inſtead of ſuch a Penalty *r.* ſo ſevere a Penalty. *P.* 16. *L. penult.* inſtead of the King *r.* the laſt King. *P.* 18. *L.* 23. for immortale *r.* immortali.

MVSEVM
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